**Charity in Russia and in Great Britain**



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**Introduction**

The word *"charity"* entered the English language through the Old French word "*charité*", which was derived from the Latin "*caritas*". Originally in Latin the word *caritas* meant preciousness, dearness, high price. From this, in Christian theology, *caritas* became the standard Latin translation for the Greek word *agape*, meaning an unconditional love for others. However, the English word more generally used for this concept, both before and since (and by the "King James" Bible at other passages), is the more direct *love*.

St Paul's *agapē* was *not* primarily about good works and giving to the poor, although in English the word "charity" has steadily acquired this as its primary meaning, wherein it was first used in Old French at least since the year 1200 A.D. While the methods of giving may vary (food, money, clothing, health care), there are three main kinds of charity: pure, public, and foreign. Pure charity is entirely gratuitous. Public charity is charity that benefits the whole rather than the individual. Foreign charity is when the beneficiary lives in a country different from where the funds or services are being sent from.

Whether it is a small non-profit or a worldwide organization, charities are an integral part of every community. Charities change the lives of people in need every day with even the smallest of donations making a large impact on a community.

Charity has been part of human culture for thousands of years. There are numerous instances of charitable acts in ancient civilizations dating back as far as 2500 BCE (or 4,500 years ago), which is around the time the Egyptians were building the pyramids. More recently over the last 30 years or so, donations to charitable organizations have increased consistently year-over-year, far outpacing the rate of inflation. Today, charitable giving is a core value of western culture with over 95% of U.S. households donating to charity in 2013.

**Charities in Russia**

Russia is home to one of the world’s wealthiest, most expensive and illustrious cities- Moscow. The world’s largest country has some breathtaking landscapes, an intriguing culture, the finest Vodka in the world and by far, some of the most amazing cities in Moscow and St. Petersburg. The country is one of the world’s most powerful, but is also perceived as being one of the most corrupt. It doesn’t help when every Hollywood movie villain is of Russian descent, either, but in the real world, Russians are some of the loveliest and hospitable people a visitor can come across.

The power discrepancy between rich and poor is a growing concern, as the rich get richer and the poor, at best, remain the same. Given the enormity of the country, it isn’t hard to see why so many of the rural areas suffer from poverty, a lack of infrastructure and a crippling economy. Social concerns in Russia are of an international focus, due to police brutality and disregard for human rights- many people are routinely beaten, tortured, electrocuted and raped during interrogations, despite it being listed in the Russian constitution as illegal.

For example, Chechnya is a devastating centre of violence, suppression, unequal gender rights, cultural honour killings and a highly corrupt society. To be tortured, raped or beaten by police in custody is considered normal. Chechens are also discriminated against by wider-Russia, and have been the targets of Neo-Nazi attacks and police brutality which goes largely unpunished. Between Russia and Chechnya (a federal subject of Russia), widespread poverty, racism, murder, rape and corruption destroys lives perhaps more so than anywhere else in the world. The contrast between the allure of the big cities, and the impoverished realities in many parts of the country is nothing short of frightening.

The best charities in Russia aim to eradicate poverty, enforce women’s rights, prevent human trafficking and sex slavery, wipe out corruption and change the racist attitudes in some segments of the population shown towards Chechens. The Best Charity has foreign correspondents working in Russia, who are able to provide a glimpse into a country whose media is at times heavily filtered, and the truths hidden. Our sources our kept, and will always remain confidential for fear of reprisals- a fact exhibiting regularly by those who speak out against the Russian government and the grim realities in society. The Best Charity has outlined five courageous charities who are making changes in Russia and Chechnya for the better (Charity Russia, Love Russia, Ahmad Tea, Go Abroad, United Planet). Russia needs your help desperately- as a country which is large and powerful, economists fear that the income disparity and living conditions between rich and poor, city livers and rural villagers, will continue to expand and its social problems grow with force. If we all act today, we can help pave a better way tomorrow for Russians affected by poverty, racism and violence.

Here are some of the most famous charity organizations within the Russian Federation:

**Naked Hearts Charity Foundation** was founded by supermodel Natalia Vodianova in 2005. It’s a philanthropic organization that strives to provide a safe and inspiring environment in which to play for every child living in urban Russia. Naked Hearts built its first play park in 2006 in Vodianova’s hometown Nizhny Novgorod. Since that they have built more then 38 playgrounds.

**The Vladimir Potanin Foundation** was established for implementation of socially significant long-term projects in the sphere of domestic education and culture. It is a private foundation with the budget financed by personal assets of billionaire Vladimir Potanin. The foundation primarily focuses on the implementation of long-term scholarship and grant programs. They are aimed at talented young students of the country’s major state educational institutions, as well as at talented teachers. Culture supporting projects are also of importance for the foundation, which aims to encourage vocational and creative growth of the Russian museum society. The foundation strives to support innovations of pro-active and creative museum professionals with potential for cultural breakthrough. The foundation annually awards more than 400 grants and 2,300 scholarships.

**Podari Zhizn** is an initiative by a group of doctors, journalists, actors and others concerned about helping children with cancer. The foundation aims to provide social and psychological support to children with cancer, to raise funds for their treatment and rehabilitation and to assist in the construction and equipment of a new modern oncologic and hematologic center. Throughout the year, various charity and fund-raising events take place.

**Charities in the UK**

Charities play a vital and varied role in all aspects of British national life, from promotion of the arts to campaigning for change to the delivery of public services. There are over 161,000 charities in the UK, active in areas across the spectrum of civil society, and comprising a paid workforce of 0.8 million people. The size and variety of the charitable sector in the UK means that many of the country’s citizens have had contact with charity in a myriad of different ways at different points in their lives, whether as donors, service users or volunteers.

Over half of the UK population donate to charitable causes (CAF 2014a). More than a quarter of uthem (29 per cent) volunteer at least once a month and 44 per cent at least once a year (Cabinet Office 2014). Interacting with charities is a regular part of British life, with 40 per cent of people in England and Wales reporting that they or their close friends and family have benefited directly from using charity (Ipsos MORI 2014). This is reflected in charities’ positive reputation among the public, and the high value attributed to their work. Charities are also considered to contribute a unique and significant social value to public life by the majority of the UK public, with 96 per cent saying that they play an essential, very or fairly important role in society. In addition to their role in UK civil society, charities also contribute significantly to the UK economy. In 2011, charitable organizations earned an overall income of £39.2 billion and held net assets worth nearly £105 billion. In that year alone, they contributed £11.8 billion to the economy, equivalent to almost 1 per cent of the gross valued added of all industries in the UK (ONS 2013a).

However, despite widespread consensus on the socioeconomic value of charity and its contribution to society, the current climate of austerity presents a number of serious challenges to the charitable sector. As a result of austerity measures, charities are delivering more public services and are involved in more complex delivery arrangements, while experiencing a surge in the level of need and demand for their services.

Here are some the most noticeable charitable organizations that operate in the UK:

The **RSPCA** (Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals) was the first organisation dedicated to the well-being of animals anywhere in the world. In England and Wales alone, the RSPCA employ more than three hundred inspectors whose job it is to investigate reported cruelty to animals. The SPCA was set up in London in 1824. At this time it was considered strange that people should care about cruelty to animals. They were regarded as either food, transport or sport. In 1840 Queen Victoria gave the organisation permission to be called a royal society: The RSPCA. These days there are almost two hundred branches in the UK.

The **RNIB** (Royal National Institute of the Blind) is the UK’s leading charity for the blind. Sight loss is one of the most common disabilities in the UK with over a million people suffering from either partial or total blindness. The RNIB challenges the disabling effects of sight loss by providing information and offering practical services to help people lead as normal a life as possible. The organisation also works on the underlying causes of blindness working towards its prevention, cure or alleviation. The RNIB have centres all over the UK.

**TBG** (Tidy Britain Group) is an independent national charity fighting to improve the quality of the local environment. They aim to make people more aware of the negative effects of litter, dog fouling, graffiti and vandalism and to get everyone involved in doing their bit to keep Britain clean. The work of the TBG is done mainly through campaigning. Volunteers work closely with councils and businesses to organise educational programmes designed to raise awareness of the problems. The TBG’s sister organisation, Going for Green, concentrates on pollution issues. The two groups share premises and have the same Chief Executive.

**Mencap** is a charity which is dedicated to fighting against discrimination towards those people who suffer from any kind of learning disability. Most of Mencap’s work is campaigning. People with learning disabilities are disadvantaged because of discrimination and lack of funding of community care. Mencap raises awareness by working at local, national and European levels to raise the profile of those issues that affect people with learning disabilities. It also provides services of education, housing and employment as well as support and advice for families and carers of sufferers.

**EveryChild** is a relatively new charity which was created when two existing organisations, the CCFGB (The Christian Children’s Fund of Great Britain) and the ECT (European children’s Trust) decided to merge in 1983. The organisation works with children, families and communities in twelve countries. The organisation believes that every child has the right to grow up and develop to their full potential in a secure, safe, family environment, free from poverty and exploitation. EveryChild identifies the needs of a particular community and then sets up sustainable projects to ensure that children in these communities have basic rights such as healthcare, education, social services and community development. EveryChild sets up the projects so that they are self running. The organisation then moves on to new projects, leaving things in the hand of locals.

**Charity concepts across the two cultures**

There is no point in denying it – the principal problem that is addressed by the majority of charitable organizations is poverty. Unfortunately, Britain and Russia are not an exception. This issue became the starting point for charity work in these countries. However, we should remember that there were very different reasons for these situations. Such serious concerns needed drastic measures, and the governments started tackle the problem creating schools, hospitalsstate asylums for the poor and the sick. Of course, there have always been great philanthropists and benefactors in both countries who have immensely contributed to the fight against poverty: they donate money, build necessary infrastructure and encourage others to actively take part in this cause.

Unfortunately, the main difference between the cultures is the degree of participation of the ordinary citizens. Britons take their duty to help others seriously, and almost every person has participated in one or another charity event in their lives. In sharp contrast, Russians tend to mistrust sucj institutions and rely heavily on the governmental help. This leads to inactiveness when it comes to donating money, time or help.

**Conclusion**

Finally, I would like to share with you some of the greatest benefits for everybody that you can get if you decide to donate something to a charity:

**1. Experience More Pleasure**   
In research conducted by the National Institutes of Health, participants who chose to donate a portion of $100 they were provided enjoyed activated pleasure centers in the brain. Although this experiment was controlled and scientific, it did show that donating money simply makes you feel better, which is something we can all benefit from.

**2. Help Others in Need**   
We do not live in a perfect world, and there's never going to be a perfect time to give—but there are always people out there in need of help. Whether interest rates are rising, the economy is in the doldrums, or even if you are experiencing financial difficulties of your own, the reality is that when you donate your money, you help others who need it.

**3. Bring More Meaning to Your Life**   
When you donate money to charity, you create opportunities to meet new people who believe in the same causes that inspire you. That, and making a real impact on those causes, can infuse your everyday life with more meaning. If you have been stuck in a rut, whether personally or professionally, sometimes the simple act of donating cash can do the trick and reinvigorate your life.

**4. Promote Generosity in Your Children**   
When your children see you donating money, they are much more likely to adopt a giving mindset as they grow up.

**5. Realize that Every Little Bit Helps**   
You do not need $10,000 to make a difference in someone's life. In developing countries, even just a few dollars could result in a week's worth of meals for a starving child, much-needed medical attention, and even improved schooling. Do not just think of your cash donation from an economic perspective. Often that money can go a lot further elsewhere in the world.

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